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CONNECTICUT RIVER SALMON

By Newton C. Brainard

Whenever sportsmen get together in the Connecticut River valley it is inevitable that some reference will be made to the sport which would be theirs if only salmon were still in the river. Usually pollution is blamed for their absence.

When one tries to find out something about the Connecticut as a salmon river, real information turns out to be very scarce. Here and there in old newspapers, before 1800, we come across an occasional reference. Old account books mention them in their debits and credits. A Suffield diary gives the results of an early fishery near the Enfield Rapids but nowhere do we find authentic information telling how plentiful these fish were before the civilization of the white man exterminated them.

One thing is certain, overfishing and pollution had nothing to do with their disappearance. The first was cared for by legislation restricting the size of nets and limiting the length of nets and the time of their use. New Hampshire passed such laws as early as 1729, and Massachusetts soon after. Surely these must have been among our earliest conservation laws and followed surprisingly close after the introduction of the nets, concerning which an early historian records, "Salmon nets began to appear in 1700."

Pollution did not begin until two generations after the salmon had disappeared. A large river can only be polluted by a considerable amount of sewage or industrial waste. Sewage cannot exist until a municipal water supply has been installed and this is usually true with the waste problem. Municipal water supplies were not common until about Civil War times and pollution could not have been serious until some years after that. It cannot be ignored if an attempt is made to restore the fish but it has had no effect on past history.

Of course, the Indians knew of the salmon and caught them. Undoubtedly they used the torch and spear with skill and it is recorded that they secured many by means of dip nets as they ascended the falls of the upper river. Angling for sport was unknown; fish were sought for food but the most telling methods of that day still permitted an adequate stock of breeding fish to reach the spawning beds in the tributaries and upper waters. Salmon Brook, in Granby, Salmon River, in Lyme, with its Salmon Hole in Leesville, show where some of the redds were, while Timothy Dwight in his "Travels" records that they ascended the main river to its headwaters "Quite up to Colebrook," in New Hampshire, just below the Connecticut Lakes.

No shortage in the stock of fish was reported until a dam, high for those

days, was erected near South Hadley, Mass. about 1795. This was soon followed by another at Montague, Mass. The effect of these was almost immediate. David D. Field, Timothy Dwight and other writers of the early 1800's record that in about five years after these dams were erected the salmon had left the river. The same result occurred with the shad in 1849, when the Holyoke Dam was built. These dams had no fishways and both salmon and shad, entering the river on their annual return to the spawning beds, found their progress blocked. After milling around they went back, down the river, seeking other grounds and never returned.

Returning to our early history we have records of salmon weirs in New Hampshire in the early 1700's. Hadley, Massachusetts, had at least five notable "salmon swims" where seines were regularly operated. In 1794 a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly refers to fish pots at Enfield which had been "operated for more than 85 years." All along the river, farmers from the valley towns came down to the stream during the spring run to catch the salmon and shad and salt them down to add to the family provisions. The speed with which the salmon disappeared is indicated by the statement of Joseph Hayden, the Windsor Locks historian, who reports the last salmon caught there, a 23-lb. fish, in 1805.

The sparse early records fail to indicate any excessive number of salmon in the Connecticut River, even in the early days. The Suffield diary, already mentioned, shows that the author operated a fishery for many years. He records salmon and shad running at about the same time but never mentions any unusually large catches.

In 1798 Joseph Beckwith advertises in *The Connecticut Courant* that he is going down river and will take orders for *small* quantities of salmon or shad. Perhaps the size of his boat, rather than any scarcity, is the cause of this limitation on his business.

Two interesting accounts show us that salmon were appreciated by the gourmets.

On December 28th in 1787, Thomas Allen, of New London, inserted this advertisement in *The Connecticut Gazette*.

> December 26th. A generous price bid for the first fresh SALMON caught and sent to their humble servant.
> T. Allen.

On February 15, 1788 his bid had seemingly been answered as the following note in the *Gazette* shows.

> February 12 Pleasant, serene, warm morning, wind S.W. Caught this morning at Lyme, a firm fresh SALMON, and arrived at the City Coffee-House, meridian.

A year later, on January 23, 1789 the first fish of the season was again reported in this item.

> January 19 This day dined at the City Coffee House, a number of gentlemen, on a royal (now federal) fresh *Salmon*, wt. 26 lb.—caught by Nathan Tiffany, at Lyme, Connecticut-River.

Two interesting facts are shown by these notices. The first is the early date of the first salmon. It would not have been expected until about April. The second is that both fish came from the Connecticut River and not from the nearby Thames.

Our second account comes from Wickford, Rhode Island, where Mrs. Anstes Lee wrote in 1855.

May 1791

"On Tuesday morning, after a cordial shaking of hands and with his best wishes for a pleasant journey, we left for Hartford. We took the usual route through Windham and lodged that night at a public house in Bolton, kept by one Mr. White, twelve miles short of Hartford. We rose early on Wednesday, and arrived at Hartford and put up at Bull's Tavern (sign of the bunch of gilded grapes), and took breakfast on *bloated* salmon. I particularly recollect about the salmon, as it was the fashion in early times for parties of gentlemen of Rhode Island to make a special visit to Hartford almost yearly to luxuriate on this rare and delicate fish, which at that period were there in great abundance, and rarely any in the Narraganset rivers. . . ."

To duplicate this dish of "bloated" salmon, we refer you to the 1796 cookbook of "Amelia Simmons, an American Orphan."

"Most white or soft fish are best bloated, which is done by salting, peppering and drying in the sun, and in a chimney; after 30 or 40 hours drying, are best broiled, and moistened with butter, &c."

The later story of our salmon has little of interest. In 1861 local caught salmon were advertised in the *Hartford Times*. In 1867 a Committee of the Legislature, working with similar delegations from the other New England states recommended stringent laws regulating and limiting netting, with suitable penalties. No results are reported.

In 1880 a salmon hatchery was installed on the Farmington River, at Poquonock. 600,000 fry were raised. For a few years small catches were reported. About 1895 the United States Fish Commission put salmon parr in the river with the result that in 1900 and 1901 over fifty mature fish were caught. An occasional salmon is still caught by the shad nets but there is no longer a run of salmon.

As to the other rivers in Connecticut, we know that salmon once frequented the Thames and were caught as far up the tributaries as Willimantic. No catches are reported after 1822. Here, too, milldams drove out the migratory fish.

As a finale to this story of the Connecticut River salmon let us review the old story of the apprentice agreements which were supposed to have protected the poor boy by a clause stipulating that he was not to be required to eat salmon more than twice a week.

This story was intended to show how plentiful and cheap salmon was here, and has been generally accepted as true. As a matter of fact, it is an English or Scotch tradition which was not true, even in the land of its origin. As long ago as 1867 the *London Field* offered a reward of five pounds to anyone who would produce one of these agreements. The reward was withdrawn a year later, unclaimed.

BOOKBINDERS IN CONNNECTICUT

For some years we have been compiling a catalogue of arts and crafts in Connecticut. When we came upon references to various trades, we have invariably made a note of them. In hopes that additions will be forthcoming, we commence with a list of bookbinders in Connecticut prior to 1800.

1702 Joseph Benton, Hartford [Credited with £00:03:09 for binding Caleb Stanley's Law Book] Caleb Stanley, Jr., account book, C.H.S.

1744 Israel Johnson, Wallingford [Binder's stamp on Alexander Wolcott's account book] C.H.S.

1774 Nathaniel Patten, Norwich

1776 Nathaniel Patten, Hartford. *Connecticut Courant,* Dec. 30, 1776

1778 Bevil Webster

1781 John Trumbull, Norwich. *Connecticut Gazette,* July 27, 1781 3:2

1785 James Orr, Hartford. *American Mercury,* Nov. 14, 1785 3:3; Feb. 11, 1788 4:2

1785 Samuel Hall, Middletown. *Middlesex Gazette,* Dec. 20, 1785 3:3; July 4, 1789 3:3

1788 Alexander M'Donald, Norwich. *Norwich Packet,* Oct. 31, 1788 3:2

1789 John Gray, Hartford. *American Mercury,* May 4, 1789 4:3; Oct. 12, 1789 4:2

1791 James Spencer, Hartford. *American Mercury,* July 18, 1791 3:3

1797 Simon Carew, Norwich. *Norwich Packet,* Jan. 19, 1797 4:2

1798 A. Steel, New Haven. *Middlesex Gazette,* Dec. 21, 1798 3:4

1798 N. Bailey, Middletown. *Middlesex Gazette,* Dec. 21, 1798 3:4

ANNOUNCEMENT

We should like to call your attention to the April issue of *The Ladies Home Journal* in which two articles of Connecticut interest are featured. Richard Pratt continues his series of Regional Houses with pictures in color of "The Mowings," home of Heinze Warneke, and "Dunstaffnage," both in East Haddam and the Lord House, in Essex. All three houses are typical examples of early architecture and range from one nearly three centuries old to one of the Georgian period.

The second article of particular interest to Connecticut, is a fashion feature on Mrs. John Davis Lodge, wife of the Governor of Connecticut.

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

Construction on the wing was delayed three weeks due to a strike in the Ohio kiln supplying the brick. This is a special type which harmonizes with the stone of the main structure. The delay puts us somewhat behind schedule, but permitted completion of drainage, plumbing and grading before erection of scaffolding.

Two of the four galleries are finished with the exception of window hangings, and exhibits have been installed. The first installment of showcases has arrived and the final shipment is expected before the end of March. Installation of exhibits and labelling in these cases will require some additional time, but the end is in sight!

An important letter of particular interest to Hartford was recently purchased largely through the generosity of Morgan B. Brainard. The text of the letter follows:

Washington
16th July 1864

Sir

I beg leave to submit to you a letter from Genl Terry in behalf of Col. Joseph R. Hawley, to whose merits I have on former occasions called your attention.

All that is said in his favor by Genl Terry I would fully indorse. I have known him intimately for ten years, and know of no one who has been more devoted to the cause in which we are all interested than Col Hawley. He volunteered at the very beginning, and has continued in active service since—the Governor and others earnestly desire his promotion—his friends have seen others of less merit and capability promoted—and they feel extremely solicitous, as you will perceive by Genl Terry's letter, that his worth and services should be recognized.

It is, I believe the only instance when I have asked this distinction, and this I have refused on repeated occasions, with others, because I know the honor could not be more worthily bestowed.

Very Respectfully
GIDEON WELLES

His Exy
A Lincoln

[Endorsed on back] I believe Mr. Welles has never had a Brig. Genl. on his recommendation. I wish this appointment made, so soon as it can be with consistency.

A. LINCOLN

July 18. 1864.

Joseph Roswell Hawley was born in 1826 and was one of the founders of the Republican Party in Connecticut.

At the beginning of the Civil War, he enlisted the first company of volunteers from the State and rose from the rank of captain to Major-General. Hawley, who had been Editor of the *Hartford Evening Press*, later became Editor of the *Hartford Courant* with the merger of the two papers. He was Governor of the State, and was a United States Senator from 1881 until shortly before his death in 1905.

Gideon Welles, who was Secretary of the Navy in Lincoln's cabinet, was born in Glastonbury in 1802, and by 1826 was a part owner and Editor of *The Hartford Times*. He held many political posts and was also active in founding the Republican Party in Connecticut. The Society owns a great many papers of Welles, and this new acquisition is a valuable addition to the collection.

C. G. WOODWARD LOAN COLLECTION

Last May we announced the founding of the C. G. Woodward Loan Collection. At that time we anticipated it would require only a month or two to get it started. However, with moving, renovations and construction, we have had to delay cataloguing the collection. It is far from completed, but in reply to the numerous inquiries already received, the following titles are ready. The fee is fifty cents per month for each book, which should cover mailing charges and necessary bookkeeping. A fine of five cents a day must be charged on each book not returned on schedule. From time to time additions to the collection will be listed in the *Bulletin*.

SAVAGE, JAMES. A genealogical dictionary of the first settlers of New England. . . . Boston. 1860. 4 volumes.

TITCOMB, SARAH ELIZABETH. Early New England people. Some account of the Ellis, Pemberton, Willard, Prescott, Titcomb, Sewall and Longfellow, and allied families. Boston. 1882. 288 pp.

TALCOTT, S. V. comp. Genealogical notes of New York and New England families. Albany. 1883. 747 pp.

ABBE, CLEVELAND. Abbe-Abbey genealogy: In memory of John Abbe and his descendants. New Haven. 1916. 511 pp.

ALDEN, EBENEZER. Memorial of the descendants of the Hon. John Alden. Randolph, Mass. 1867. 184 pp.

ANDREWS, H. FRANKLIN. History of the Andrews family. A genealogy of Robert Andrews, and his descendants, 1635 to 1890. Audubon, Iowa. 1890. 234 pp.

ATWATER, FRANCIS. Atwater history and genealogy. Meriden. 1901. 492 pp.

AVERY, SAMUEL PUTNAM. The Avery, Fairchild and Park families of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Hartford. 1919. 151 pp.

LONGFELLOW, MARIAN. History of the Society of Descendants of Robert Bartlet of Plymouth, Massachusetts. . . . Springfield. [1909] 114 pp.

BICKNELL, THOMAS WILLIAMS, ed. History and genealogy of the Bicknell family . . . of Normandy, Great Britain and America. Providence. 1913. 584 pp.
The Bicknells and the family re-union, at Weymouth, Massachusetts, September 22, 1880. Boston, 1880. 71 pp.

SMITH, MRS. WILBER BROOKS (JULIA BILLINGS). An intimate review. The Billings family of Bridgeport, Connecticut. 1933. 37 pp.

BLISS, JOHN HOMER. Genealogy of the Bliss family in America, from about the year 1550 to 1880. Boston. 1881. 810 pp.

BOARDMAN, WILLIAM F. J. The ancestry of William Francis Joseph Boardman, Hartford, Connecticut. . . . Hartford. 1906. 419 pp.

GOLDTHWAITE, CHARLOTTE. Boardman genealogy 1525-1895. The English home and ancestry of Samuel Boreman, Wethersfield, Conn., and Thomas Boreman, Ipswich, Mass. with some account of their descendants. . . . Hartford. 1895. 778 pp.

BOLLES, JOHN A. Genealogy of the Bolles family in America. Boston. 1865. 63 pp.

MORRIS, JOHN E. The ancestry of Daniel Bontecou of Springfield, Mass. . . . Hartford. 1887. 29 pp.

SHEPARD, JAMES. Governor William Bradford, and his son, Major William Bradford. New Britain. 1900. 103 pp.

LLOYD, A. P. Genealogy. Family of Aaron and Sarah Bradley, of Guilford, Conn. Hartford. 1879. 46 pp.

FIELD, DAVID D. The genealogy of the Brainerd family, in the United States . . . New York. 1857. 303 pp.

JONES, EMMA C. BREWSTER. The Brewster genealogy 1566-1907. A record of the descendants of William Brewster of the "Mayflower". . . .

New York. 1908. 1415 pp.
The family of Joris Dircksen Brinckerhoff, 1638. New York. 1887. 188 pp.

CHAPMAN, F. W. The Bulkeley family; or the descendants of Rev. Peter Bulkeley, who settled at Concord, Mass. in 1636. Hartford. 1875. 288 pp.

BURNHAM, RODERICK H. Genealogical records of Thomas Burnham, the emigrant, who was among the early settlers at Hartford, Connecticut. . . . Hartford. 1884. 292 pp.

BUTLER, JAMES DAVIE. Butleriana, genealogica et biographica; or genealogical notes concerning Mary Butler and her descendants, as well as the Bates, Harris, Sigourney and other families. . . . Albany. 1888. 162 pp.

HOLDEN, FREDERIC A. Genealogy of the descendants of Banfield Capron, from A.D. 1660 to A.D. 1859. Boston. 1859. 263 pp.

CHAPMAN, F. W. The Chapman family: or the descendants of Robert Chapman, one of the first settlers of Say-Brook, Conn., with genealogical notes of William Chapman, who settled in New London, Conn.; John Chapman, of Stonington, Conn.; Edward Chapman, who settled at Windsor, Conn.; and Rev. Benjamin Chapman, of Southington, Conn. Hartford. 1854. 413 pp.

FOWLER, WILLIAM CHAUNCEY. Memorials of the Chaunceys, including President Chauncey, his ancestors and descendants. Boston. 1858. 304 pp.

JOHNSON, WILLIAM W. Clarke-Clark genealogy. Records of the descendants of Thomas Clarke, Plymouth, 1623-1697. North Greenfield, Wis. 1884. 168 pp.

CLEVELAND, HORACE GILLETTE. A genealogy of Benjamin Cleveland, a great-grandson of Moses Cleveland, of Woburn, Mass., and a native of Canterbury, Windham County, Conn. Chicago. 1879. 260 pp.

ABBE, TRUMAN. Robert Colgate the immigrant. A genealogy of the New York Colgates and some associated lines. New Haven. 1941. 464 pp.

ROGERS, CHARLES. Genealogical memoirs of the families of Colt and Coutts. London. 1879. 59 pp.

COLTON, GEORGE WOOLWORTH. 1644-1911. A genealogical record of the descendants of Quartermaster George Colton. Lancaster, Penn. 1912. 588 pp.

CORNWALL, EDWARD E. William Cornwall and his descendants. New Haven. 1901. 178 pp.

CORWIN, EDWARD TANJORE. The Corwin genealogy (Curwin, Curwen, Corwine) in the United States. New York. 1872. 284 pp.

BURT, ALVAH WALFORD. Cushman genealogy and general history including the descendants of the Fayette County, Pennsylvania and Monongalia County, Virginia, families. Cincinnati. 1942. 432 pp.

DAVENPORT, A. BENEDICT. A history and genealogy of the Davenport family, in England and America, from A.D. 1086 to 1850. New York. 1851. 398 pp.

A genealogical register of the descendants in the male line of Robert Day, of Hartford, Conn., who died in the year 1648. New Haven. 1840. 44 pp.
SAME. Northampton, Mass. 1848. Second edition. 129 pp.
The family of the Rev. Jeremiah Day of New Preston to January 1, 1900. A genealogical appendix to the chronicles of the Day family. New Haven. 1900. Second edition. 43 pp.

DEMING, JUDSON KEITH. Genealogy of the descendants of John Deming of Wethersfield, Connecticut with historical notes. Dubuque, Iowa. 1904. 694 pp.

DIMOND, EDWIN R. The genealogy of the Dimond or Dimon family, of Fairfield, Conn. together with records of the Dimon or Dymont family of East Hampton, Long Island and of the Dimond family of New Hampshire. Albany. 1891. 179 pp.
A family gathering of the descendants of Mrs. Sarah Cleveland Dodge, on her eightieth birth-day. November 7, 1860. New York. 1861. 36 pp.

DRAKE, SAMUEL GARDNER. Genealogical and biographical account of the family of Drake in America. . . . 1845. 51 pp.

DUNSTER, SAMUEL. Henry Dunster and his descendants. Central Falls, R.I. 1876. 333 pp.

EDDY, RUTH STORY DEVEREUX. The Eddy family in America. Supplement of 1940. Boston. 1940. 180 pp.

STARR, FRANK FARNSWORTH. The Eells family of Dorchester, Massachusetts in the line of Nathaniel Eells of Middletown, Connecticut 1633-1821. With notes on the Lenthall family. Hartford. 1903. 218 pp.

ELIOT, WILLIAM H., JR. Genealogy of the Eliot family. New Haven. 1854. 184 pp.

ELY, HEMAN. Records of the descendants of Nathaniel Ely, the emigrant, who settled first in Newtown . . . was one of the first settlers of Hartford, also of Norwalk, Conn., and a resident of Springfield, Mass., from 1659 until . . . 1675. Cleveland, Ohio. 1885. 515 pp.

FALES, DE COURSEY. The Fales family of Bristol, Rhode Island. Ancestry of Haliburton Fales of New York. 1919. 332 pp.

FIELD, HENRY M. Record of the family of the late Rev. David D. Field, D.D., of Stockbridge, Mass. 1880. 16 pp. (incomplete)

FLAGG, ERNEST. Genealogical notes on the founding of New England. My ancestors part in that undertaking. Hartford. 1926. 440 pp.

FLINT, JOHN and STONE, JOHN H. Genealogical register of the descendants of Thomas Flint, of Salem . . . Andover. 1860. 150 pp.

BRAINARD, LUCY A. A supplement to the Foote genealogy, compiled by Nathaniel Goodwin, of Hartford, Conn., in 1849; giving the descendants of Nathaniel Foote, of the seventh generation from Nathaniel Foote, one of the first settlers in Wethersfield, Conn. Morrisville, N.Y. 1886. 26 pp.

(*To be continued*)

The price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.